DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 284 243 CS 210 665

AUTHOR Huse-Inman, Kathy
TITLE Reflections.
INSTITUTION South Dakota State Div. of Elementary and Secondary Education, Pierre.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 35p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; *Content Area Writing; *Creative Writing; Curriculum Development; Descriptive Writing; *Integrated Activities; Secondary Education; *Teacher Role; Writing Difficulties; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS *Journal Writing; *Student Journals

ABSTRACT

Aimed at teachers interested in implementing student journals in their classrooms, this guide offers subjects students can write about and ideas for how to use journal writing as a classroom activity, and justifies writing across curriculum lines. The first section of the guide, entitled Mirrors, suggests that students can benefit from writing in an unstructured way, either privately or for the teacher to read, and offers guidelines for reading and grading the journals and for handling students who dislike writing in them. The second section, Images, offers subjects for students to write about, such as interesting words, quotations, wishes, speculations, family activities, and values. The guide encourages teachers to have students sign a contract to write in the journal, and a copy of the contract is included in this section. The third section, Illusions, justifies writing across curriculum boundaries, and offers suggestions for how journals can be used in various types of classrooms. The guide encourages teachers to have students write at the beginning or end of classes in order to focus and gather their thoughts, or during discussions when ideas become unfocused. It notes that science classes can use journals as logs of events in an experiment, and mathematics classes can use them to solve difficult equations when students are confused. A conclusion suggests that teachers encourage even those students who are not natural writers to keep a journal. A bibliography is included. (JC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

reflections

ED284243

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

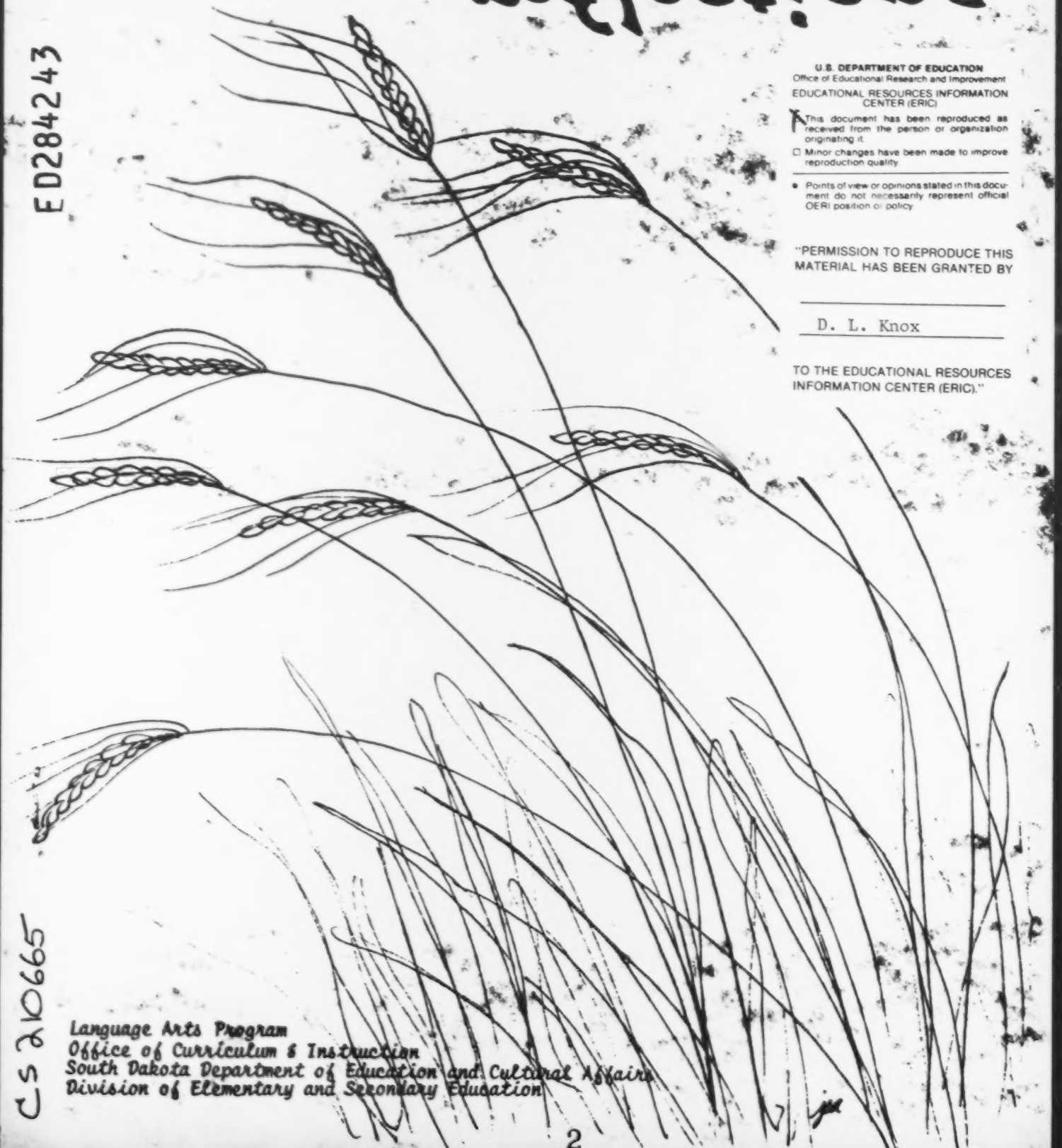
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. L. Knox

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."



CS210665

Language Arts Program
Office of Curriculum & Instruction
South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

"It is the policy of the South Dakota Division of Elementary and Secondary Education that no person be subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, religion, sex, age, physical and mental disabilities, or marital status in any program, service, or activity for which the Division is responsible as required by Title IX, P.L. 93-112, Sec. 504, and other state and federal laws. Any person wishing to discuss his/her rights under the Division's nondiscrimination policies, contact the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Pierre, South Dakota 57501, phone (605) 773-3243. This material has been reviewed for racism and sexism content."

Published in accordance with the authority granted by SDCL 13-1; 13-3; and 13-4 to provide information and guidance as may be deemed valuable to the educational interests of the state. 250 copies printed at a cost of $.69 per copy. seventh printing

reflections

issued by...

South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
Language Arts Office
Kneip Building
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

developed/directed by...

Kathy Huse-Inman
Language Arts Program Director
Office of Curriculum & Instruction

art/secretarial assistance by...

Jeanne Anderson

1980

state board of education...

Jim Emery, President, Custer

Elden B. Samp, Vice President, Flandreau

Patricia Farrar, Britton

Deanna Knudson, Sioux Falls

Dr. Donald Kratochvil, Brookings

Judy Olson, Rapid City

Marlene Zieser, Tyndall

James O. Hansen, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

A. Joyce Levin, Ph.D.
Director
Curriculum and Instruction

Kathy Huse-Inman
Director
Language Arts Office

introduction...

Although teachers should use every conceivable way to get students to write, many content area teachers object to the time it takes to assign and evaluate student writings. Recent composition theory strongly supports the importance of writing which students do strictly for themselves, writing which the teacher may never see nor formally evaluate. This, of course, is the criteria for student journals, a form of writing that when well used is capable of having an immense impact on classroom learning. Writing has a learning place in every classroom, and the following pages will not only give a brief overview of the journal, but also will provide an array of suggestions and activities so that you may implement it into <u>your</u> classroom.

table of contents...

mirrors. 1-6

journals...

images. 7-17

ideas...
motivators...
assignments...

illusions. 18-22

'cross curriculum lines...
responding to journals...

conclusion. 23-24

bibliography. 25

mirrors
willows

journals

because...

-many students have difficulty just getting words on paper in sufficient volume

-many students lack fluency for they feel they have nothing to say or write about

-some students aren't fluent because they are afraid of making mechanical or grammatical errors

-some feel there is no urgency about putting anything down on paper

-many students aren't allowed to experiment with and refine their writing

-writing is a lifelong skill

-students don't have to write whole compositions to learn to write well

-students need encouragement to think about individual problems

-students need to use the tools they've learned earlier

-opportunities are needed to record the truth in a way the writer wants to at the time

-students need increased confidence in academic and interpersonal relations

-teachers need to know students better and to understand their problems, ambitions, etc.

-ideas can flow readily in a relaxed atmosphere

-this writing has all the advantages of free writing

-students learn to write by writing

-student journals may be the best interdisciplinary tools we possess, integrating personal with academic knowledge across the curriculum

write to...

-state an opinion

-explain an idea

-express feelings

-share experiences

-clarify thoughts

-record impressions

-experiment

values for...

<u>students</u>

-provides an audience, if student wants (family, friends, teacher, etc.)

-freedom from traditional grading

-avenue of expression

-sense of accomplishment

-sense of self

-individual choice

-an outlet for those who have a deep need to tell one's own story

-chance to make lists of events that can be re-examined

-chance to sift through and evaluate experiences

-encouragement in a process

values for...

teachers

-provides constant opportunities for students to write

-provides positive way to start class or complete class

-individualizes classes

-establishes rapport

-gives insight into every student

guidelines for...

-shared once a week

-teacher responds positively to content with questions or statements

-address students by name in entries

-kept confidential

-pages turned in half if don't want it read by teacher

-remarks made on journals or on supplements (student preference)

-write daily in class

-use spiral notebook (for those who have difficulty getting started, use small pocket-sized notebook)

-anything can be used as a starter

-write with students

-if thoughts go dry, have students write the last word over and over or write "think" or "I don't know what to write" until they are ready to continue

-apply correct rules to best of ability, showing improvement as time goes on

-format could include diary entries, or any of a variety of ideas

different ways to...

-entries written during ten minutes allowed in class

-free time to write and read only when students ask

-time writing - students are not to stop for specified length of time

-students allowed to express whatever they please in whatever time frame they choose

-write to music

-write in a different surrounding (outside, field trip, etc.)

problems with...

forgotten journals

-students write on a sheet of paper and have to copy the entry the next day when the journal is brought to class

lost journals

-use the same procedure as above; however, after a week, the student must start a new journal

non-writer

-for those who spend the allotted time doing nothing, the same amount of time is spent after school or at lunch -- they may also be asked to continue writing after others have finished

responding to journals...

you can respond to journals in number of ways

-they can be collected each week and choice excerpts dittoed

-write a few comments in the margins or a brief note at the end of the journal - these responses should always be positive and very specific--praise for a sparkling sentence, a suggestion for next week's journal

-near the end of a period ask the students to prepare their journals to be read, deleting entries too personal to share and adding page numbers and a table of contents for major entries

ask students to write entries in which they evaluate their own journals: which entries make the greatest impact on you now? which seem least worth doing? what patterns do you find from entry to entry? for some this seems to be the clarifying activity of the term

-at the end of the course or a specified time period, assign a credit/no credit mark, or raise student grades for good journals (lots of writing and experimentation) but not penalizing students for mediocre ones

-some may insist on not reading the journals; however, for those who are just beginning to write, a teacher's comments can help them expand their journals and make them more useful; also, some students believe that if a writing assignment isn't read by the teacher it has no worth; students also feel that journals must count for something--as must every requirement in an academic setting - if the teachers don't look at them, they don't understand how they could count

-entries can be written during the ten minutes allotted in class, and anytime student wants to write outside of class

-if a spelling word is a problem, have them leave it blank, or spell the best way possible - no looking up spelling words during the ten minutes - that can be done later

-privacy will be respected - if students don't want the teacher to read it, they can so specify

options for..

-ask the students to write for a required length of time (ten minutes) on a topic suggested by the teacher: describe your bedroom; describe an object that you own that you treasure most; how can your parents teach you to be responsible?

after giving five such assignments on five consecutive days, ask each student to select his or her best piece of writing, rewrite it, and to pass it in for a grade

-this option requires students to write once a week at home in a quiet place - here the student is given a list of writing topics and signs a contract (a copy of the contract is on a following page) - the topics are broad in scope and encourage students to explore themselves, their values, and their environment - writing in their journals about a provocative question helps students to see their positions more clearly and even to discover new ideas - class discussions on controversial issues are healthier and more dynamic if students have first written about these issues in their journals (see following pages for ideas)

-this option requires students to write for a specific length of time (one week) on selected topics - writing can be initiated in class and worked on both inside and outside the classroom - at the end of the time period, the journals are submitted to the teacher

after the first week of journal writing, the students then suggest topics for use the next week

this option not only encourages individual writing, but since they are all writing on the same topic, they will be interested in what each other says

images

ideas...

students often enjoy writing about their ideas or beliefs

-should boys learn how to cook? Should girls?
-what do you suppose schools will be like in 2000?
-what do you think about pay-as-you-watch television?
-what changes do you think science will make in our homes during the next ten years?
-can you imagine what living on the moon would be like?
-fortune-tellers
-I believe in education
-three dangers of self-satisfaction
-the evils of gossip
-New Year's resolution
-the power of music
-money: a false value
-keeping up with the Joneses
-I'm an optimist
-premonitions
-why I respect curiosity

words or phrases quite often are sufficient to motivate children to write

-rugged lineman - jumppass - touchdown
-log cabin - girl - old man - wolf
-banjo - straw hat - hot rod
-choose four nouns and eight adjectives and put them on the board - have them write a short story using these words
-explorer - ocean - storm
-desert - horse - snake
-huge, shaggy bear - terrifying noise

quotations written and discussed can often lead to a very interesting interpretation and composition - these can often be topic sentences from which paragraphs can be developed*

-"Every time you speak, your mind is on parade."
-"The first time I read an excellent book, it is to me just as if I had gained a new friend." Goldsmith
-"A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after awhile he knows something." Mizner
-"Speech is the mirror of the soul; as a man speaks, so he is."
-"Reading Maketh a Full Man." Bacon

*these are quotes containing sexist terminology that cannot be changed because of authenticity

ideas...

-"I've shut the door on yesterday and thrown the key away - Tomorrow holds no fears for me, since I have found today."
-"Hitch your wagon to a star." Emerson, from Civilization
-"Fear to do ill, and you need fear naught else." Franklin
-"Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves." Lincoln
-"A person's career will rarely reach higher than his usual speech."
-"A wise old owl sat on an oak; The more he sat the less he spoke; The less he spoke the more he heard; Why aren't we like that wise old bird?" E. H. Richards

motivators...

<u>often, a suggested topic or title can be used to induce students to write - here are some titles which might be used:</u>

-my most embarrassing moment!
-my proudest moment
-my greatest wish come true
-my ideas of luxury are
-I want a college education because...
-I was the first person on the moon
-once I was very frightened when...
-this scared me!
-I get angry when...
-I can't understand why
-I hope I'll never...
-my happiest day
-my favorite sport
-what I would do with $100
-the hardest job I ever tried to do
-something I should not have done
-the kind of person I am
-what I want to be
-the most exciting experience of my life
-the importance of self-discipline
-my reading taste
-I didn't believe it!
-dad knows all the answers
-advice I never take
-among my souvenirs

motivators...

-why I can't save money
-my grand entrance
-I struggle with my conscience
-three of my secret ambitions
-my luck often runs out
-am I gullible!
-what I like (dislike) about boys (girls)
-controlling my temper
-traditions in my family
-my good intentions
-what I've learned from watching television
-I always do things the hard way
-why I hate alarm clocks
-I invent a do-it-yourself plastic surgery kit
-my anti-gravitational machine

<u>here are some topics which might be used:</u>

-activities after school - friends to your house to play, birthday parties, shopping
-activities in school - science, social studies projects, special assemblies, field trips, visitors
-make up a story - from your mind, from a story you have read, related to something you have done, from pictures on the bulletin board, from a different point of view such as "Have you ever been an ornament on a tree?"
-description of your best friend - why is he/she your best friend?
-things you see around you - tell about the most beautiful thing you've ever heard
-things you hear as you sit writing
-things you feel - imagine their texture
-imagine how things smell or taste - like lunch today or breakfast this morning
-special holiday activities, vacations, Thanksgiving, Christmas
-your mood(s) - are you happy, sad, tired, ambitious?
-things that make you happy or sad
-tell about a book you're presently reading
-list rhyming words
-extend vocabulary by writing lists of words meaning the same as eat, fat, said, walked, went, etc.
-alliteration: the soft sheen of summer sunlight
-similies: as quick as a fox, as slow as a turtle
-metaphors: he/she is a devil

motivators...

-use spelling words in a story - try not to look at the words before you use them
-write poetry - any form
-tell all you can about one color
-themes - the day I decided not to go to school
-jokes
-news - from newspaper or TV news
-pin up special pictures to write ideas from - what do you see exactly? or create a story from it, sequencing - what came just before? at the time? just after?
-letters to people (can be copied later onto another sheet and sent)
-what do you hope we will do while in the fourth grade? (at the beginning of the year) what do you expect fifth grade to be like? (at the end of the year)
-what would you like to do when you are grown up?
-about weather
-from a kernel sentence written on the board, add adjectives, more details
-from story starter sentences on the board, create a story
-from story starter sentences on the board, write about something that it reminds you of
-your dreams
-your pets; animal stories
-imagine what is happening outside the classroom right now
-what do you imagine other members of your family are doing right now?
-work on a skill recently developed, e.g., quotation marks around direct quotes
-list related words - quiet words, fast words, sports words
-write about emotions - when were you the happiest? saddest? most embarrassed? most fearful?
-what are your jobs or chores at home?
-pet rocks
-write about a TV show you watched last, naming characters, location, and explaining plot
-description of a relative who is very special to you and why
-list your favorite TV programs and tell why you like them
-list television shows you don't like and tell why
-imagine you are shipwrecked on an island alone
-pretend you are a real person or fictional character - write in your journal as if you were that person

motivators...

-in what ways are you similar to a three year old?
-do you want to go to college and/or get married?
-why are myths important?
-do you want to learn the truth?
-why do artists often lead difficult lives?
-what do you dream about?
-how would you deal with a divorce?
-how do you deal with frustration?
-what is one small change that you promise, now, to make in your life?
-what are your feelings about taking drugs?
-what is infatuatuon?
-how would you deal with the death of someone close to you?
-which impressionist painter do you react to the most?
-in what ways are you creative?
-what is quality?
-what do you fear most?
-how important is religion in your life?
-how could your parents best teach you to be a responsible person?
-what is courage?
-what poem has changed your life?

subjects...

generations

-Ken and his parents have just arrived home after his release from the police station where he and his friend were arrested for having a large amount of pot in their possession - write a dialogue they might have

-what do you know about the world your parents, your teachers and other adults you know lived in as teenagers? interview one adult about what the world was like when he or she was a teenager - write up your interview as a magazine story

-write a poem or short essay on one of the following words: honesty, justice, love, friendship, evil, maturity, beauty, school spirit

illusions and reality

-things do not always turn out the way people imagine they will: marriage for example - every marriage begins with high hopes - tell what happens in the marriage of Alice and John that leads to their divorce - write a short story or dialogue

-there are many ways that people try to forget their troubles; some are more dangerous than others - explain some of the methods you yourself use or some that your friends use

-you live in a new society in which the naked human face is never seen - from the moment of birth, everyone is required to wear a mask - by the time the child is two years old, he/she is allowed to make or choose his/her mask - adults usually have a wardrobe of at least two dozen masks - write a short story or play in which you, the main character, tell what it is like to live in masquerade - what mask would you choose?

adults

-many senior classes write class prophecies telling what they think the members of their class will be like in ten years - write your own prophecy, telling what you hope to be like and to have achieved by the time you return for your class reunion

-write an essay telling what you think your life's purpose is

subjects...

children

-if you were a child born today, what kind of life would you hope for? write your hopes in the form of a poem or prayer

-make up five questions that you could ask a child under eight years of age that would help you find out what he/she thinks and feels - your questions could be about what the child hopes and fears, the view he/she has of himself/herself, or what he/she thinks is important in today's world - write an interview - if you can't find a child under eight to interview, use your knowledge of children to write a fictionalized interview

values

-make up a story, poem or essay describing how the world might have been created - express your values and religious convictions if you want to - you might want to use your imagination or give a humorous explanation - you might also decide to write a scientific explanation

-make up a sentence that expresses something you value - find or draw a picture that expresses the same idea and make a poster

-make a list of things you like or believe in, then turn it into a poem - if you prefer, you can make a list of things you dislike or things you believe are wrong

education

-write an essay about the things you have learned that you think are most important and tell how you learned them

-if you could design an ideal school, what would it look like? would it have classrooms and corridors or some other arrangements? how would you build your school and how would you decorate it? draw a floor plan for your ideal school and write a description

-what subjects would an ideal school offer? what courses should be required of all students and which should be elected?

journal assignments...

description

-journal (in class): develop a feel for concrete detail through exercises in close observation of interesting objects (see George Hillocks, Observing and Writing)

-journal (outside class): (1) be a "five senses tape recorder" - write quickly, recording exactly what you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel: slush seeping through winter galoshes; coffee-break chatter; sweet apple crisp and dull diet fare; your pen's shadow crawling across a page (2) write about your day, but move beyond simple chronology by trying to capture sense impressions and moods - draw your reader into your experience

-paper: describe a person or an object that is special to you

autobiography

-journal (in class): (1) relax, close your eyes, and imagine yourself as a young child - focus on one scene and write quickly, trying to recapture how you felt at the time (2) draw a "life-line," labeling events that had a lasting impact on you (see Richard Beach, Writing about Ourselves and Others)

-journal (outside class): write about one such recollection from childhood each day for a week - or for two weeks

-paper: choose the best journal entry and write an autobiographical sketch that captures a scene from your childhood

literary analysis

(my students choose a book from a list of well-written autobiographies, but this assignment could be based on other literary types)

-journal (in class): recall a scene that made a strong impression on you and record all the vivid, concrete words, phrases, and images - now look for a pattern among these words - can you classify your entries according to more general concepts? (try the method of naming, opposing, and defining in Ann Berthoff's Forming, Thinking, Writing: The Composing Imagination)

journal assignments...

literary analysis

-journal (outside class): analyze several scenes from the autobiography you have read, trying to discover why the writer has presented these word-pictures

-paper: (1) develop your best journal entry into an analytical essay; show how your writer has used vivid, sensory language to develop a theme (2) any other open-ended question may be explored in journal entries and then developed into a paper

writing in style

-journal (in class): (1) translate a visual image into one sentence of prose (paintings by Breughel and Chagall and photographs from Family of Man work well) (2) develop syntactic fluency by imitating a variety of sentences written by professionals (see James Gray, Teaching the New Rhetoric, and Francis Christensen, Notes Toward a New Rhetoric)

-journal (outside class): (1) continue to record your observations of people and places with your "five senses tape recorder," but now distill your impressions into one or two flowing, cumulative sentences (2) now try some longer scenes, but continue to work on effectiveness of individual sentences

-paper: develop your best entry into a feature article describing an action-filled scene (a political rally, a disco, a laundromat, a funeral)

research paper

(to avoid the dreary library report, encourage students to choose topics they already know and care about, topics they can investigate first hand as well as through published sources)

-research journal: (1) for each published source, record bibliographic data, short summary, and quotations - as you write, think about the ideas and how they relate to other material you have encountered - respond by inserting your own questions and comments (2) record interviews and direct observation, again with your own comments (3) grapple with a thesis, organize an outline, and write at least two drafts

journal assignments...

research paper (continued)

-paper: turn in the related journal entries with your completed research paper (a five-page paper is often accompanied by forty pages of journal - it takes about five minutes to leaf through the journal entries, and because the writer had to think, not just record, the paper itself tends to be worth reading)

argument analysis

(students are asked to read a group of argument essays; they are also urged to re-examine articles they read for their research papers - a sample argument is analyzed in class)

-journal: each day comment on one essay - look for the writer's voice, intended audience, and purpose - what assumptions does the writer make? what evidence does the writer offer? what fallacies detract from the argument? would the essay convince its audience? does it convince you? (these entries are written schematically)

-paper: use your best journal entry as the basis for a paper that analyzes how an argument worked or failed to work

persuasive essay

(students are asked to choose an issue with which they are already involved, one they can present convincingly to members of their writing class)

-journals: (1) write quickly about the issue to generate your own ideas and feelings (2) read up on the issue, recording your notes and comments as for a research paper (3) choose a published source you strongly disagree with, and talk back in detail (4) explain your position on the issue to at least three different audiences (5) after completing the first draft of your paper, look back and consider your own persuasive style - is your voice formal, intimate, objective, sarcastic, pleading? smooth out any inconsistencies in your voice (6) can you strengthen your essay with vivid sensory detail, sharply-drawn scenes, natural dialogue, and varied, mature sentence structure?

-paper: show off by writing a persuasive essay - convince us with your logic and delight us with your rhetoric

pact or contract...

I promise to

-use the specified loose leaf binder,
-set aside time each week to write,
-write on at least ten of the suggested topics,
-bring the journal to class each Friday,
-write a summary for the last entry, noting particularly any changes in attitude,
-be truthful

it is understood that the journal will be my private thoughts and need only be shown to Mr., Mrs., Ms. _____

signed _____ date _____

attach this to your journal

illusions

'cross curriculum lines...

One of the most common complaints of high school English teachers is the lack of support from other departments for the teaching of composition. Although some students would like us to believe that they never write in any other class, we know this isn't true. The composition dilemma may not lie in writing per se in other classes, but in the quantity of writing being assigned and completed. Writing an occasional report or answering questions in fragmented sentences at the end of chapters doesn't give students the needed practice and reinforcement of the writing skills learned in English class. Most students believe that effective writing is a unique requirement of composition courses and that even when writing is an integral part of some classes, it doesn't really "count."

While we can't make all teachers experts in teaching composition, we can try to use writing as a form of reinforcement not only in learning skills, but also as a valuable teaching tool in all areas of the curriculum. Clarification, exploration, and individualization are only some of the areas in which journal ideas from the following pages might help in your class to strengthen student knowledge and understanding.

'cross curriculum lines...

introduce a discussion class with a five-minute journal-write

-any class - any subject - use the journal to bridge the gap between the student's former activity (walking, eating, listening) and your classroom - suggest a topic related to the day's lesson, i.e., a quote from the reading assignment, and ask students to use those first few minutes to compose (literally) their thoughts and to focus them in a public direction - without such preparatory time, initial discussions are often halting and grouping - initiate the discussion by reading your entry first to put the class at ease, for your sentences may be awkward, halting, and fragmentary just as those of your students sometimes are - repeated periodically, this exercise provides students with a structured oral entry into the difficult public arena of the classroom and helps affirm the value of their personal voice

precede your lecture with a short journal-write

-like the discussion class, the lecture also benefits from a transition exercise which starts students thinking about the scheduled topic - for example, prior to beginning a lecture in a nineteenth-century American literature class studying "Transcendentalism," ask students to define their concept of romanticism in writing - this brief exercise sets the scene for the lecture - alternatively, you might use a short discussion based on the student writing as a lead into the lecture - either way, the students have involved themselves with the material because they have committed words to paper

end a class with a journal-write

-ask students to pull together information or ideas they have learned during class - their summaries can serve several purposes: (1) "what did you learn in here today--one thing--anything?" or (2) "what questions are still unanswered?" these questions can be handled orally, of course, without recourse to the journal, but forcing loose thoughts onto paper sometimes generates tighter thinking - and again, the private act of writing encourages students to collect thoughts otherwise lost in the push-and-shove hurry to leave class - too often instructors lecture right to the bell, trying to make one last point, while at the same time realizing by the rustle in the room that the students are already mentally on their way to lunch - better, perhaps, to cover less lecture territory and to end class with students recording their own observations and summaries - that final act of writing/thinking helps students to synthesize material for themselves and thereby increases its value

'cross curriculum lines...

interrupt a fifty-minute lecture with a five-minute journal-write

-listening is passive and note taking often mechanical; even the best students drift into daydreams from time to time- a journal-write offers students a chance to re-engage themselves personally with the lecture topic - writing changes the pace of the class; it shifts the learner into a participant role and sometimes forces clarity from confusion simply by requiring that pen be put to paper - writing clears out a little space for students to interact with the ideas thrown at them and allows them to focus problems while the stimulus is still fresh - "reflect on the notion that Karl Marx is a philosopher rather than a scientist," or "explain the phrase 'the medium is the message' in your own words" - planned in advance, these pauses serve as both welcome breaks and fruitful exercises

-a variation of the planned lecture pause is the spontaneous one, where the lecturer senses misunderstanding in the audience or where the lecturer loses track of an idea - while writing in journals, either teacher or students may put their finger on the problem and so make the next fifteen or twenty minutes more profitable - of course, instructors do not plan for misunderstanding; but if it occurs, the journal-write is one way out

interrupt a discussion for a journal-write

-refocus a digressive or rambling discussion by simply calling "time out" and asking students to write for a few minutes in their journals - "what are we trying to explain?" or "restate the argument in your own words; then let's start again" - pauses in a discussion change the class pace and allow quiet, personal reflection - we all need a little time-out in some classes yet seldom find a pedagogical justification for it - in one-sided discussions, where a few students dominate and others can't participate, interrupt with a short journal-write and sometimes the situation will reverse itself, as quiet students find their voices and loud ones cool off - such pauses can also raise student consciousness of the roles people play in class if the teacher asks certain questions - "what is your part in this discussion?" or "try to trace how we got from molecules to psychopaths in the last fifteen minutes" or "why do you think Tom just said what he did?" - writing about talking provides distance by forcing us into the "spectator role" and thereby generating thoughts we didn't have before

'cross curriculum lines...

use the journal-write to solve problems

-in a class on modern literature ask students to write about the lines in an ee cummings poem which they do not understand; the following day many students will have written their way to understanding - what better way to make sense out of "what if a much of a which of a wind" or "my father moved through dooms of love"? - math or science teachers might ask students to solve difficult equations by using journal-writing when they are confused - the journal can become a regular tool in any subject area to assist in problem solving, since the act of writing out the problem is, itself, a clarifying experience - switching from number symbols to word symbols sometimes makes a difference; just as putting someone else's problem into your own words makes it your problem and so leads you one step further toward solution

assign journal writing as homework

-suggest that students respond to questions or ideas arising during the day's class--or preview topics in preparation for the next class - ask students to keep a journal record of their responses to a current issue; on a given day these responses can form the basis for a more formal class discussion - writing in a journal requires students to go one step beyond thinking vaguely about their responses--but stops short of the formal written assignment which may cause unproductive anxiety over form, or questions - homework questions in other fields may be less "open-ended" than the ones asked in liberal arts courses; but even in the most specialized fields some free, imaginative speculation helps - and when that speculation is recorded in the journal, students have a record to look at later that documents where they've been and perhaps suggests where to go next

keep journals to keep written records

-science and social science teachers might ask students to keep a "lab journal" as well as a lab notebook to record reactions to their experiments - such an account adds a personal dimension to lab records and provides a place to make connections between one observation and the next - perhaps such journal entries should be interleafed alongside the experimental data, adding the student's own thoughts about that data - field notes jotted in a biology notebook become an extended observation written

'cross curriculum lines...

keep journals to keep written records (continued)

in a "biology journal"; this entry, in turn, might well become the basis for a major research project - personal reflections recorded in a history journal help a student to identify with, and perhaps to make sense of, the otherwise distant and confusing past - trial hypotheses find first articulation in a social science journal; later, the most interesting of these ideas provides the impetus for further experimentation and study

conclusion...

-don't expect every child in your room to be a natural John-Boy Walton, carrying his notebook under his arm from room to room while his brain bulges with ideas screaming to be recorded - don't despair if students don't scramble to their desks each morning to jot down the latest incident on the bus - do encourage everyone to keep a log of comical, unusual, or interesting happenings in class, on the playground, or at home - do remind students that it's easy to write about something that really happened or something you saw with your own eyes or did with your hands - this type of writing is best evaluated informally, perhaps simply by keeping a record of who is writing, how many pages, and with what regularity

Thoreau, whose Walden grew out of his journal,

has this to say about journal writing:

> "...a journal is a repository for all
> those fragmentary ideas and odd scraps
> of information that might otherwise
> be lost and which someday might lead
> to more 'harmonious' compositions"

no greater authority than Thoreau need be

mentioned in support of journal writing

bibliography...

Classroom Practices in Teaching English, 1979-1980, National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Cutter, Mary Lou, "Journal Writing is Only the Beginning," English Journal, October, 1979.

Fader, Daniel, The New Hooked on Books, Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1976.

Fowles, Joy, "Ideas for Teaching Writing to Seventh and Eighth Grade Students," English Journal, September, 1978.